

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 12872 01 OF 02 171422Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

EB-07 TRSE-00 /067 W

----- 022029

R 171359Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4613

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 12872

E.O. 11652:

TAGS: PGOV, PINT UK

SUBJECT: UK POLITICS ON HOLIDAYS

REFERENCE: LONDON 10476

1. SUMMARY: RISING OF PARLIAMENT AUGUST 6 BROUGHT WHOLESale EXODUS OF POLITICIANS FROM WESTMINSTER AND OFFERS TIME FOR APPRAISAL OF CURRENT POLITICS. TO A CERTAIN EXTENT POLITICS TOO IS ON HOLIDAY, PENDING RE-VIVAL OF INTEREST IN AUTUMNAL POLITICAL CONVENTIONS AND RESUMPTION OF PARLIAMENT IN EARLY OCTOBER. GOVERNMENT'S POSITION SEEMS ASSURED AND PROSPECTS FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS WITHIN NEXT HALF YEAR REMAIN HIGHLY UNLIKELY. END SUMMARY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 12872 01 OF 02 171422Z

2. AFTER SEVERAL ALL-NIGHT SESSIONS, PARLIAMENT ROSE

AUGUST 6 TO SIGHS OF RELIEF FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE HOUSE. PROGNOSIS MADE IN EARLY JULY (REFTEL) FOR LONG, TOUGH SUMMER WAS JUSTIFIED WITH HEATED DEBATE ON CUTS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND ON GUILLOTINED MOTIONS. NOW THE ONLY ELEMENT OF GOVERNMENT'S ESSENTIAL LEGISLATION PROGRAM REMAINING FOR VOTE IN SPILL-OVER SESSION OF THIS PARLIAMENT, WHICH RESUMES OCTOBER 11, IS THE CONTENTIOUS BILL TO ELIMINATE PAY BEDS IN NHS HOSPITALS. SPILL-OVER SESSION WILL ALSO BE A CLEANING-UP OPERATION TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION BY HOUSE OF LORDS, COMPLETION OF PRIVATE BILLS, ETC.

3. PARLIAMENTARY SESSION NEARING COMPLETION HAS SEEN GOVERNMENT SCRAPING THROUGH ON LARGE NUMBER OF CONTENTIOUS BILLS THREATENED BY OPPOSITION AND, ON OCCASION, BY LABOR'S LEFT-WING. GOVERNMENT'S NARROW MAJORITY WAS ERASED BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS CREATED BY STONEHOUSE CASE AND NON-VOTING LABOR MP RYMAN, AND BECAUSE OF CONSERVATIVE VICTORY IN ONE BY-ELECTION. WHILE ONE OF THESE WILL NOW APPARENTLY BE RESOLVED BY STONEHOUSE'S RESIGNATION FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BECAUSE OF HIS LACK OF SUCCESS IN THE LAW COURTS, RYMAN CASE IS STILL NOT RESOLVED SATISFACTORILY. STONEHOUSE VACANCY WILL LIKELY BE FILLED BY EARLY BY-ELECTION WITH LABOR CANDIDATE EXPECTED TO WIN. THIS WILL STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT'S HAND SOMEWHAT SINCE STONEHOUSE HAD JOINED OPPOSITION (ENGLISH NATIONAL PARTY) AND FREQUENTLY VOTED AGAINST GOVERNMENT PRIOR TO HIS INCARCERATION. THE RYMAN CASE STILL AWAITS RESULT OF INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF ELECTORAL LAW. SHOULD HE TOO BE FORCED OUT OF THE HOUSE, HIS REPLACEMENT IS LIKELY ALSO TO BE A LABOR CANDIDATE. ADDITIONAL COMPLICATION FOR GOVERNMENT WAS ANNOUNCEMENT BY SCOTTISH LABOR MPS SILLARS AND ROBERTSON (SLP) THAT THEY WILL NO LONGER ACCEPT THE LABOR WHIP THOUGH THEY WILL SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT ON SOCIAL LEGISLATION.

4. CONSERVATIVE TACTICIANS FOR THEIR PART ARE HOPING (IF NOT PRAYING) FOR DEMISE OF AGING AND ILL LABOR MPS IN MARGINAL CONSTITUENCIES. THE OPPOSITION SEES LITTLE OPPORTUNITY OF ACHIEVING A VICTORY ON A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 12872 01 OF 02 171422Z

UNTIL ADDITIONAL CONSERVATIVES JOIN THE 277 ALREADY IN PARLIAMENT. ONE CONSERVATIVE TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT NO GOVERNMENT IN RECENT YEARS HAD BEEN SO BLESSED AS THIS ONE IN HAVING SO FEW BY-ELECTIONS TO FIGHT; AND THOSE ONLY IN CONSTITUENCIES WITH A HEFTY LABOR VOTE. HE SAID QUITE FRANKLY THAT THE LABOR GOVERNMENT IS DESPERATELY REFUSING DECENT RETIREMENT TO A NUMBER OF AILING LABOR MPS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ITS FRAGILE CONTROL OF PARLIAMENT.

5. WITH FIVE MANIFESTO-CONNECTED CONTROVERSIAL BILLS
PASSED BY THE TIME THIS PARLIAMENT ENDS, THE GOVERNMENT
GOES INTO THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION WITH DECKS CLEAR-
ED TO ATTACK DEVOLUTION. ALREADY FORCES IN BOTH MAJOR
PARTIES ARE LINING UP FOR AND AGAINST DEVOLUTION AND THE
GOVERNMENT, EVEN IF IT IS ABLE TO USE THE GUILLOTINE AGAIN
AND ITS ABILITY TO GAIN ENOUGH SUPPORT TO DO SO IS IN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 12872 02 OF 02 171436Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

EB-07 TRSE-00 /067 W

----- 022150

R 171359Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4614

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 12872

DOUBT, WILL HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN PRODUCING SATIS-
FACTORY DEVOLUTION LEGISLATION. THIS ISSUE POSES GREAT
THREAT TO THE LABOR GOVERNMENT IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT
BEGINNING IN NOVEMBER. DEVOLUTION IS AN ISSUE WITH WHICH

BOTH MAJOR PARTIES HAVE DIFFICULTY INTERNALLY, IN TERMS OF SATISFYING BOTH THEIR SCOTTISH AND THEIR ENGLISH MEMBERS AND CONSTITUENCIES. (SEE LONDON 12741 FOR STATUS REPORT ON DEVOLUTION.) THE POSSIBILITY OF UTILIZING A REFERENDUM AS A WAY OUT SEEMS TO BE INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE.

6. IN THE BRIEF INTERIM BETWEEN PARLIAMENTARY SITTINGS--POLITICAL ACTIVITIES RESUME INITIALLY WITH THE TUC CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 6 TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE LIBERAL, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 12872 02 OF 02 171436Z

LABOR AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCES--PUBLIC POLITICKING HAS DECREASED MARKEDLY IN ITS INTRINSIC INTENSITY AND IN THE AMOUNT OF SPACE AND ATTENTION DEVOTED BY THE MEDIA. MRS. THATCHER GOT A FEW RIPPLES FROM HER SPEECH IN DORKING ON THE SOVIET MENACE. SHE WILL ALSO GET SOME PRESS COVERAGE ON HER PLANNED TRIP TO ASIA AND THE PACIFIC BEGINNING IN SEPTEMBER. WE DO NOT EXPECT, HOWEVER, THE CONSERVATIVES TO PUSH ANY NEW INITIATIVES UNTIL THEIR ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN BRIGHTON, WHERE SOME NEW POLICIES MAY BE INTRODUCED AND DISCUSSED.

7. THE PRIME MINISTER CAN REST SOMEWHAT ON HIS LAURELS. HE CAN TAKE SATISFACTION IN MAINTAINING A SEMBLANCE OF UNITY IN THE LABOR PARTY FOLLOWING THE PRECIPITATE RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT BY WILSON AND THE STRESSES AND STRAIN OF THE LEADERSHIP BALLOTING. HE (AND CHANCELLOR HEALEY) HAVE SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING TUC SUPPORT BOTH FOR ROUND II OF WAGE RESTRAINTS AND ACQUIESCENCE IN PROPOSED CUTS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE. SYMBOLIC OF CALLAGHAN'S SKILL AND AUTHORITY IN DEALING WITH THE TUC WAS THE "HEARTS AND FLOWERS" ATMOSPHERE OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN AUGUST OF THE "NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT" (LONDON 11922).

8. INTERNALLY, BOTH IN THE PARTY AND IN PARLIAMENT, CALLAGHAN'S FIRST MONTHS AS PRIME MINISTER HAVE BEEN A SUCCESS (LONDON 10820). ADDED TO THIS, CALLAGHAN HAS HAD SOME MODEST SUCCESS IN THE INTERNATIONAL FIELD: CONCLUSION OF THE COD WAR, VISIT TO GERMANY, GISCARD'S STATE VISIT TO THE UK, THE PUERTO RICO SUMMIT, AND THE EC HEADS OF STATE MEETING. HE HAS COME UNDER FIRE FOR LACK OF BRITISH "SUCCESSSES" IN AFRICA, CYPRUS AND THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT NONETHELESS COMES ACROSS TO THE BRITISH AS ABLE, ACTIVE AND ENGAGED IN WORLD AFFAIRS. (FREQUENT CONTACTS CALLAGHAN HAS HAD AS PRIME MINISTER WITH THE SECRETARY HAVE BEEN DUTIFULLY NOTED BY BRITISH MEDIA)

9. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO RECEIVED TWO RECENT REBUFFS ON ITS LEGISLATION THROUGH THE LAW COURTS: PETER SHORE WAS

CRITICIZED FOR EXCEEDING HIS AUTHORITY IN CANCELLING
LAKER'S SKY TRAIN ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, AND FRED MULLEY
LOST OUT ON ENFORCEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION ON
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 12872 02 OF 02 171436Z

TAMESIDE. THESE, HOWEVER, WERE MINOR WOUNDS NOT CRITICAL
TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EXISTENCE AND BOTH ARE REVERSIBLE
THROUGH ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION.

10. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, THE PROSPECTS FOR GENERAL
ELECTIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE CONTINUE TO SEEM UNLIKELY,
THOUGH THE PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ISSUE WILL PERHAPS CONTINUE
TO SIMMER. THE OPPOSITION SEEMS UNABLE TO MUSTER ENOUGH
SUPPORT FOR A NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION AND, FOR THE TIME
BEING, CALLAGHAN WOULD SEEM UNLIKELY TO GAIN BY CALLING
AN ELECTION, PARTICULARLY IF UNEMPLOYMENT REMAINS HIGH
AND THE BATTLE AGAINST INFLATION CONTINUES TO DRAG. AND,
ALTHOUGH THE LACK OF A RELIABLE LABOR MAJORITY IN PARLIA-
MENT MAKES LIFE DIFFICULT FOR CALLAGHAN AND THE GOVERN-
MENT, HE UNDOUBTEDLY FEELS MORE CONFIDENT ON THE BASIS
OF RECENT EXPERIENCE TO DEAL WITH THAT, RATHER
THAN WITH THE DISAPPOINTING RESULTS A GENERAL ELECTION
MIGHT BRING. PERHAPS HIS AWARENESS OF THIS EXPLAINS HIS
PARLIAMENTARY MIEN -- THE ENIGMATIC, SLOW
SMILE OF THE CHESHIRE CAT, SOMEWHAT SUBLIMELY INDIFFERENT
TO THE YAPPING AND SNAPPING AT THE HEELS BY FRUSTRATED
MONGRELS ON HIS OWN BENCHES AND THE BENCHES OPPOSITE;
THEY HAVE CAUSED A LOT OF NOISE, PERHAPS SLOWED HIS
PACE, BUT HAVE YET TO DRAW BLOOD.

ARMSTRONG

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LONDON12872
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DC ADJUSTED PER LONDON 13111
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760315-0704
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760847/aaaabomz.tel
Line Count: 258
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 LONDON 10476
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 APR 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <10 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UK POLITICS ON HOLIDAYS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006